

ASHBURTON URBAN DISTRICT



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE HEALTH OF THE DISTRICT
FOR THE YEAR 1959

ASHBURTON URBAN DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE HEALTH OF THE DISTRICT
FOR THE YEAR 1959

F. T. HUNT, MB., BS., MRCS., LRCP., DPH., DIH.,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b28809877>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
STAFF	3
SECTION A. STATISTICS	4
SECTION B. HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA	6
SECTION C. INFECTIOUS DISEASES	9
SECTION D. SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA	11
SECTION E. INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD	15
SECTION F. HOUSING	16
APPENDIX	18

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year 1959.

I commenced my appointment as your Medical Officer of Health on April 1st 1959 and I also hold the appointment of Medical Officer of Health for Buckfastleigh Urban District, Totnes Borough and Totnes Rural District, together with the appointment as Assistant County Medical Officer for Devon County Council.

In the pages of this report I have summarised the work carried out by the Public Health Department and the problems which have been dealt with during the year. The statistics in the report do not always make interesting reading but, nevertheless, they do give an indication of the work carried out, and offer a means of comparison with past and future years.

The estimated population has risen by 10 to 2,700. The birth rate has risen from 14.09 (1958) to 17.2. The death rate has risen from 11.69 (1958) to 13.1. 46 deaths occurred and 24 of these were caused by diseases of the heart and circulation, whilst another 12 were caused by malignant neoplasms.

Only 4 infectious diseases were notified during the year, but this figure is somewhat misleading, as a number of infections escaped notification.

The usage of water was restricted for a time during part of the summer. There is now a definite need for a storage reservoir to supply dwellings in the Hele-Cross - Holne Turn area.

The Slaughterhouses (Hygiene) Regulations, and the Slaughter of Animals (Prevention of Cruelty) Regulations came into force at the beginning of the year, and visits were made to the slaughterhouses to advise on the requirements of these regulations. Obviously the standard of slaughterhouses will be improved by the introduction of such regulations, whilst the legislation for the control of slaughter of animals marks a new step in this field. The repeal of the Staining and Sterilisation Regulations in respect of unfit meat was, in my opinion, regrettable.

Much time was spent on food hygiene and many visits were made to food premises in the area. Minor defects were discovered on these visits but, in general, conditions were found to be satisfactory.

Visits were also made to a number of persons who claimed they were living in unsatisfactory accommodation, and had applied

for the allocation of a Council house. In these cases it was found necessary to determine whether housing defects could be improved by resorting to the Public Health or Housing Acts. In the remaining cases an attempt was made to correlate the degree of unfitness with that claimed by other Council house applicants living in unsuitable conditions. Such information that I obtained has been placed at the disposal of the Council, and I hope that they will find use for it whenever they consider the difficult question of the allocation of Council houses.

In conclusion, I would report that the health of the community has remained satisfactory, and I would like to thank the Public Health Inspector, Mr H.V. Jones, for his assistance when dealing with environmental health problems in the district.

I have the honour to be,
Mr Chairman and Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,

F.T. Hunt
.....
F.T. Hunt.

Medical Officer of Health.

ASHBURTON URBAN DISTRICT

HEALTH COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN - Councillor T.W. Gracey.
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL - Councillor A.G. French, J.P.,
COUNCILLORS -
R. Arscott.
H.C. Bennett.
W.E. Cartwright.
A. Fallows.
F.C. Tucker.

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

F.T. HUNT, MB., BS., MRCS., LRCP., DPH., DIH.,
(Appointed April 1st, 1959)

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

H.V. Jones.

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Town Hall,
Ashburton.
Tel. Ashburton 383.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S DEPARTMENT

Medical Department,
Council Offices,
61, Fore Street,
Totnes.
Tel. Totnes 2335.

SECTION A.

STATISTICS

The statistics in this report have been compiled from information collected from a number of sources throughout the year.

The monthly return of births and deaths is received from the local registrar.

At weekly and quarterly intervals details regarding infectious diseases, births and deaths are received from the Registrar General. In this manner information can be obtained on infectious diseases prevalent in neighbouring districts.

1. General Statistics

Area.....	6,778	acres
Number of dwelling houses	880	
Dwellings owned by the Council	220	
Council dwellings per thousand of population	114.5	
Rateable value (1st April 1959)	£27,004	
Estimated product of ld rate	£112	

2. Vital Statistics

Estimated mid-year population	2,700
Population at 1951 census	2,705

Births

Live births (22 males, 21 females)	43
Live birth rate per thousand population	15.9
Illegitimate live births per cent of total live births	2.3
Still births	Nil
Still birth rate per thousand population	Nil
Still birth rate per thousand total live and still births	Nil
Total live and still births	43
Crude birth rate per thousand population	15.9
Corrected birth rate per thousand population	17.2

Infant mortality rates

Total infant deaths per thousand total live births	Nil
Deaths under 4 weeks per thousand total live births (neo-natal Mortality rate)	Nil
Deaths under 1 week per thousand total live births (early neo-natal Mortality rate)	Nil
Still births and deaths under 1 week combined per thousand total live and still births (peri-natal Mortality rate)	Nil

Deaths

Total deaths (23 males, 23 females)	46
Crude death rate per thousand population	17.0
Corrected death rate per thousand population	13.1

3.

Classification of deaths

	Male	Female	Total
Malignant neoplasm, stomach	-	1	1
Malignant neoplasm lung, bronchus	2	-	2
Malignant neoplasm, breast	-	1	1
Malignant neoplasm, uterus	-	1	1
Other malignant & lymphatic neoplasms	4	3	7
Vascular lesions of nervous system	2	1	3
Coronary disease, angina	4	6	10
Hypertension with heart disease	1	1	2
Other heart diseases	2	3	5
Other circulatory disease	4	0	4
Influenza	-	1	1
Pneumonia	-	1	1
Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhoea	-	1	1
Nephritis and nephrosis	-	1	1
Other defined and ill-defined diseases	3	1	4
Motor vehicle accidents	Nil	Nil	Nil
All other accidents	-	1	1
Suicide	1	-	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	23	23	46
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

SECTION B.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF HEALTH SERVICES

1. Hospitals

The Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Hospital is situated in Ashburton under the management of the Torquay and District Hospital Management Committee. This is a general practitioner hospital with 15 mixed medical and surgical beds.

Hospital coverage for the district is also supplied by Newton Abbot Hospital and Torbay Hospital. Maternity cases are admitted to Broomborough Hospital, Totnes.

2. County Council Health Services

Under the National Health Services Act 1946, the County Council provides the following services:-

- a) Domiciliary midwives.
- b) Home nurses.
- c) Health Visitors.
- d) Services for the care of expectant and nursing mothers and children under 5.
- e) Ambulance services.
- f) Vaccination and immunisation procedures.
- g) Domestic help services (home helps)
- h) Arrangements for the prevention of illness, the care of persons suffering from illness or mental defectiveness, and the after care of such persons.

A district nurse/midwife works in the district and there is one Health Visitor available. A child welfare clinic is held every fortnight in Ashburton and the home help service is organised by the County Council with the Health Visitor acting as the local organiser. The ambulance service is operated by voluntary organisations, and ambulances are available at all times to convey people who are physically or mentally ill to hospitals, clinics etc.,

The County Council, through the Welfare Committee, provides residential accommodation in homes or hostels for persons who by reason of age, infirmity or other circumstances, are in need of care and attention not otherwise available for them. In Ashburton accommodation has been provided at "Kenwyn", Western Road.

3. Laboratory Services

Bacteriological examinations of pathological specimens and samples of milk, water and ice cream are carried out by either the Public Health Laboratory Service at Exeter, or the Public Health

Laboratory Service at Plymouth. The chemical analysis of water and other samples is undertaken by Public Analysts in Exeter.

4. Tuberculin Testing Scheme (School children)

All children attending County Primary Schools in the District now receive, as part of the general supervision of their health, a special tuberculin skin test each year. This test may indicate if the child is suffering from, or has suffered from tuberculosis. Such children are referred for further examination and, by this means, early cases of tuberculosis can be detected in the child or in the child's family.

The scheme has as its main object the detection of previously unsuspected cases of tuberculosis, and the examination of the child gives the lead for tracing the sources of the infection in the community.

5. Removal of Old and Infirm Persons to Institutions

Under Section 47 of the National Assistance Act, 1948, the Council may apply to a court for an order to remove to a suitable institution any persons who

- a) Are suffering from grave chronic disease, or being aged, infirm or physically incapacitated, are living in insanitary conditions and
- b) Are unable to attend to themselves and are not receiving from other persons thorough care and attention.

The National Assistance (Amendment) Act 1951, amended Section 47 of the 1948 Act, and enabled application for removal of urgent cases to be made by the local authority or by the Medical Officer of Health, if authorised by the Council to do so, without giving 7 days notice as previously required.

Such application may be made either to a court of "summary jurisdiction", or to a single Justice, on a certificate by the Medical Officer of Health and another registered medical practitioner.

Detention orders made in respect of these urgent cases are limited to three weeks and if it is necessary to extend this time, compliance must be made with the original requirements of Section 46.

This procedure is often resented by the person concerned, and indeed the step is not initiated lightly. It is most essential that all means should be taken to persuade the person

to go voluntarily to hospital or shelter and, on this account, it is essential that the Medical Officer of Health is called in early. In this way, he can seek the help of various persons and organisations and, given sufficient time, the statutory procedure is very rarely necessary.

When the Medical Officer of Health is called in at a late stage, he has not sufficient time or opportunity to help the patient and is then only of value in applying his signature to a document.

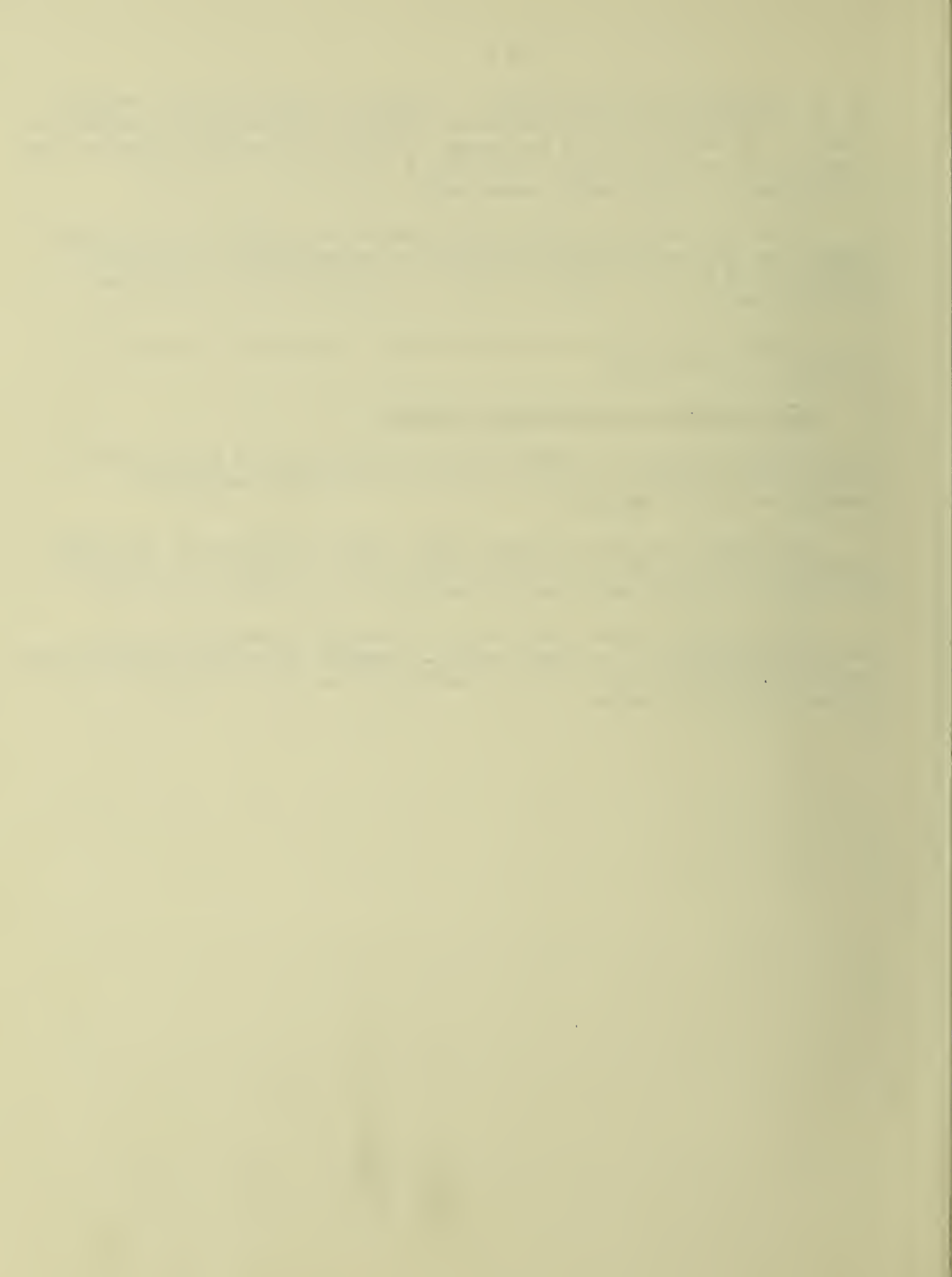
During the year it was not found necessary to resort to Section 47 procedure.

6. Mass Miniature Radiography Service

During January a Mass Miniature Radiography Unit of the South West Regional Hospital Board visited the Ashburton County Secondary School.

369 scholars and 22 staff had a chest x-ray and, although abnormalities of the chest and lungs were detected in 6 cases, no active tuberculosis was present in any of these persons.

In the same month the unit visited the Town Hall, and 345 persons had a chest x-ray. Again, no active tuberculosis was detected but other chest abnormalities were found to be present in 10 persons.



SECTION C.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OF INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES

1. Notifiable diseases

During the year 2 cases of measles and 2 cases of whooping cough were notified. Information obtained from a number of sources suggested that more cases of measles and whooping cough had occurred in the area, but these diseases were obviously not notified.

In order that local authorities may be aware of the incidence of infectious diseases occurring in their areas, and so that proper measures could be taken to deal with them, such diseases must be notified to the local Medical Officer of Health. The value of such notification ensures that the necessary measures can be taken to prevent the spread of the infection to other members of the community. Advice could also be given on the control of contacts, and the possible exclusion of such contacts from attendance at schools, exclusion from food handling and other necessary restrictions. The channels of infection could be traced and dealt with. The notification is also of statistical value in determining the occurrence of the diseases in the community, the types of persons at risk and the value of immunising procedures related to the diseases.

Undoubtedly there is now need for the revision of the list of diseases which have to be notified. There would now appear to be little value in notifying measles as very little can be done to prevent or check the spread of this disease, and statistical information is of limited value. Other diseases that might now be removed include acute pneumonia, scarlet fever and whooping cough. Additions to the list might also be considered, and tetanus, anthrax and rubella during pregnancy could well fall into this category.

At the present time inadequate notification of infectious diseases is of little value and tends to be misleading.

2. Immunisation and Vaccination

Vaccination and immunisation is available to give protection against such diseases as smallpox, poliomyelitis, whooping-cough, diphtheria, tetanus and tuberculosis. These procedures can be carried out by local medical practitioners and also under the Devon County Council scheme, sessions are carried out at local schools and the local Infant Welfare Clinic.



3. Authentication of International Certificates

In order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases several countries required that visitors should be vaccinated or inoculated against specified diseases. International certificates have now been prescribed for smallpox, yellow fever and cholera.

When completed by the medical practitioner these certificates must be authenticated by the Medical Officer of Health. It is the responsibility of travellers to see that international certificates of vaccination are available both for their family practitioner to sign and the Medical Officer of Health to authenticate. These certificates should be obtained by the travelling agency organising the individual's journey. It is not the responsibility of local authorities to provide these documents.

SECTION D

SANITARY CONDITIONS IN THE AREA

1. Water

Upland surface water is collected from the Moors and reaches the district by gravity from a large storage reservoir which can contain 300,000 gallons. The water is chlorinated and hardened by passing over soda ^{lime} ~~ash~~. In order to augment the supply, a small amount of water is continually extracted from the River Ashburn, and this water then passes direct to the reservoir where it is chlorinated.

A number of dwelling houses obtain their water from springs or wells, whilst 14 dwellings at Hele Cross are served by water from a main of the Paignton U.D.C.

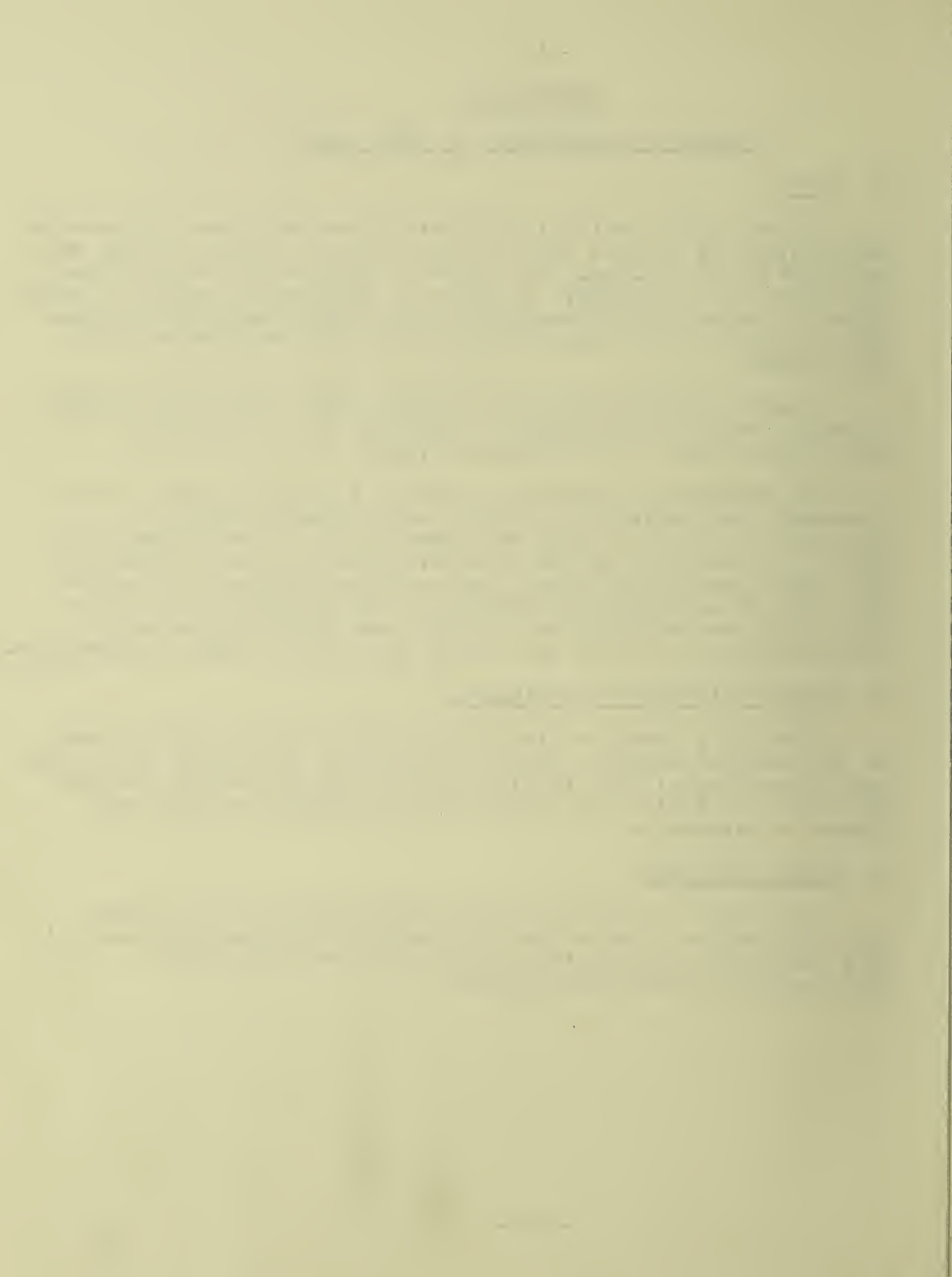
The quantity is generally sufficient for the needs of the community, but during the drought in the summer months, a restriction of use of water was necessary for a short period of time. The dwellings in the Holn Turn - Hele Cross district are not always adequately served, and a storage reservoir to serve that area is now almost a necessity. The quality of the water has always been satisfactory and frequent examinations have confirmed that the water has always been fit for human consumption.

2. Refuse Collection and Disposal

There is a weekly collection of refuse in the greater part of the district whilst a monthly collection is carried out in the more remote areas. The tip is a disused quarry at Gallows Park and this is situated well away from residential property and causes no nuisances.

3. Sewage Disposal

The sewage is treated at the Buckfastleigh Sewage Works. The infiltration of water into the sewerage system continues but to a much lesser degree than in former years, following improvements to the sewage system.



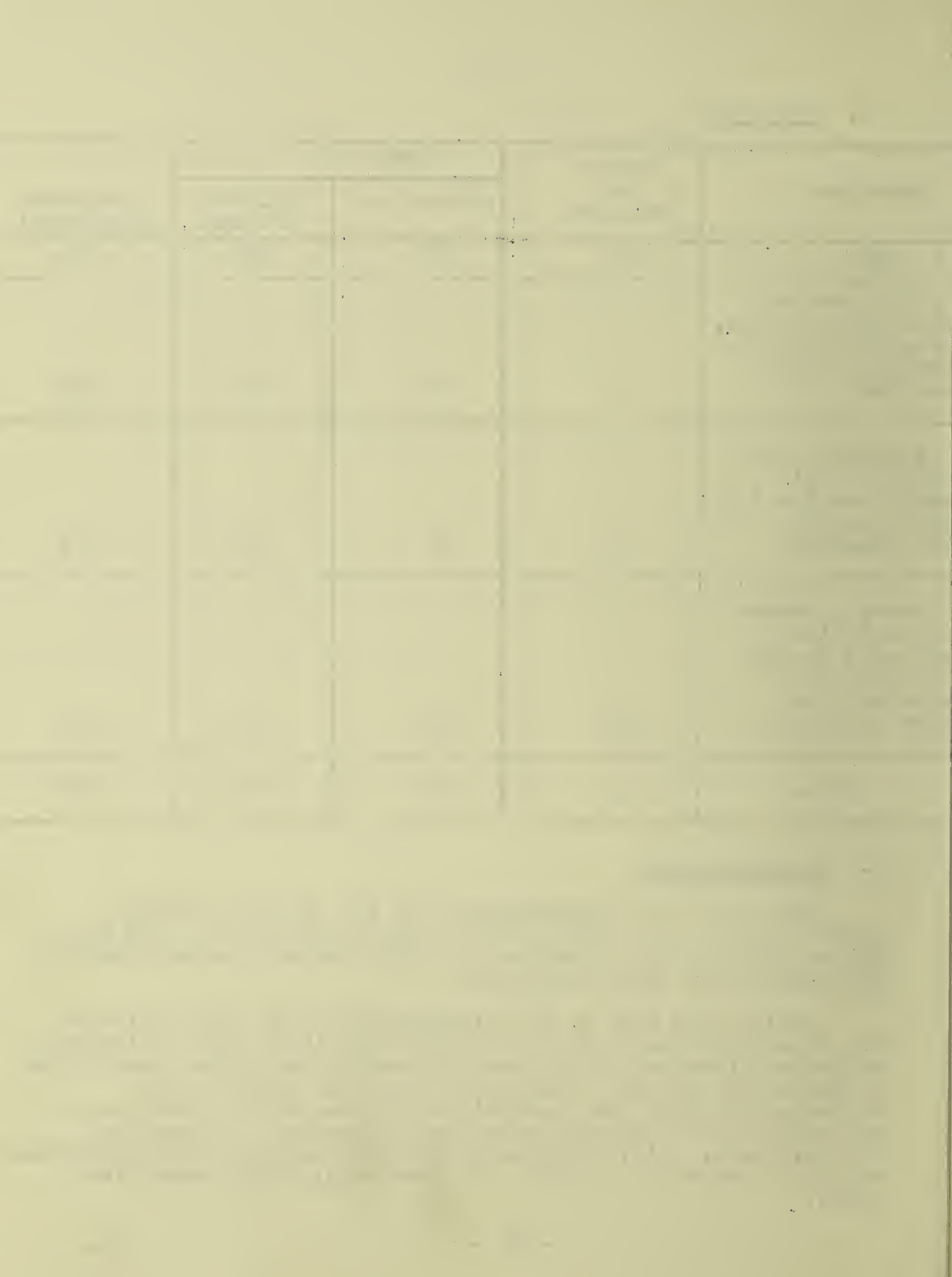
4. Factories

Premises	Number on register	Number of		Occupiers prosecuted
		Inspections	Written notices	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1) Factories in which Sections 1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local authorities	6	6	Nil	Nil
2) Factories not included in (1) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	5	5	Nil	Nil
3) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority excluding out-workers premises)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	11	11	Nil	Nil

5. Slaughterhouses

There are two slaughterhouses in the district and 104 visits were made to these premises during the year. 100% meat inspection was again possible and these inspections were carried out immediately after slaughter.

Visits were made to the slaughterhouses to give advice on the Slaughterhouses (Hygiene) Regulations 1958 and the Slaughter of Animals (Prevention of Cruelty) Regulations 1958. Most of the requirements of these regulations came into force at the beginning of 1959, but regulations relating to the construction and equipment of slaughterhouses will commence to operate at a future date. It is obvious that the standard of slaughterhouses will be improved as a result of these regulations coming into force.



	Cattle excluding cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep & Lambs	Pigs
o killed	149	-	15	819	202
o inspected	140	-	15	810	200
hat carcasses ondemned due to isease	-	-	-	-	-
arcasses of hich some part r organ was ondemned due to isease	6	-	-	-	-

Licenced Slaughtermen

Number of new licences granted in 1959	2
Number of licences renewed during 1959	6
Licences in operation at the end of 1959	3

6. Disinfection and Disinfestation

One dwelling house was disinfested following illness.

7. Pest and Rodent Control

A rodent operator works on a part time basis for this authority, and regular treatment is carried out on the refuse tips. Test baiting is carried out in the sewerage system and the operator visits private business premises in order to destroy pests.

Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 the local authority has an obligation to ensure that as far as is practicable, the area is kept free from rats and mice. For this purpose frequent inspections are necessary.

8. Caravans

There is one licenced caravan site at Waterleat. There is accommodation for 42 caravans and tents, and the site is open all the year. 20 inspections were made for the purpose of inspecting



caravans and caravan sites during the year, and conditions were always found to be satisfactory.

9. Visits and Inspections made during the Year

Visits to dwelling houses	60
Visits to food premises	50
Visits to slaughterhouses	104
Visits to factories and workshops	11
Visits to caravans	20
Drainage inspections	6
Miscellaneous visits and inspections	25



SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

1. Food Premises and Food Hygiene

There were 39 food premises operating in the area during the year. This number was made up of 6 cafes, 9 hotels and public houses, 3 dairies and milk retailers, 21 retail food premises.

During July and August, visits were made to the majority of these premises and advice was given on food hygiene and the requirements of the Food Hygiene Regulations. Further visits were made to selected premises towards the end of the year.

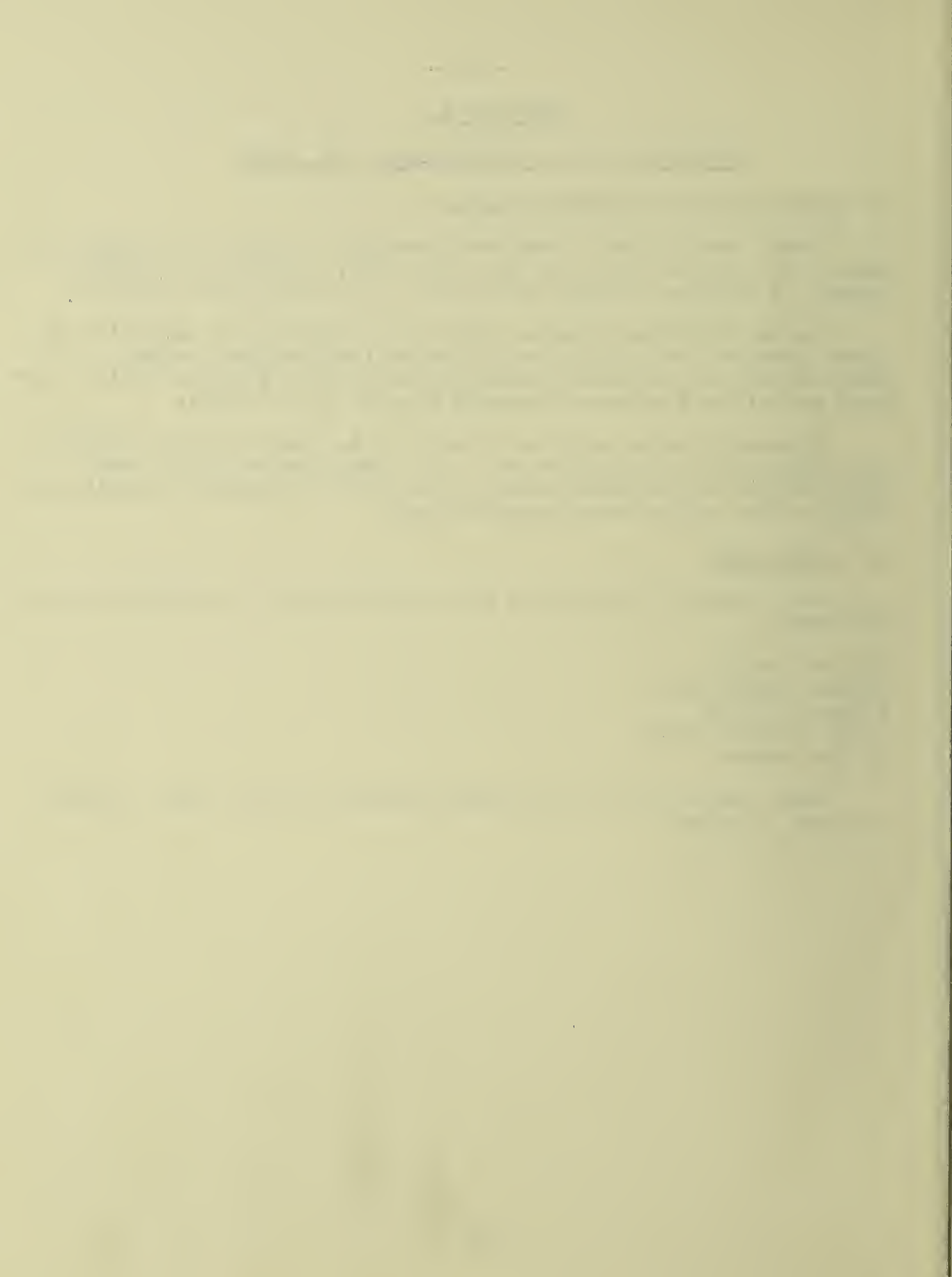
First-aid boxes were not always to be found on the premises and assistant food handlers were not always aware of all the requirements in the Regulations. In general, however, conditions found at the visits were satisfactory.

2. Unfit food

The amount of unsuitable food surrendered or condemned was as follows:-

700 fish cakes
12 lbs corned beef
2 stone of fish
9 lbs chopped pork
61 lbs cheese

Meat inspected at the slaughterhouses has not been included in these figures.



SECTION F.

HOUSING

1. General information

Total number of dwelling houses in district	880
Total number of dwellings owned by the Council	220
Total number of visits made to dwelling houses	60

3 unfit houses were demolished during the year

10 unfit houses were made fit following informal action by the
local authority.

During the year 10 houses were found not to be fit in all respects
for human habitation.

No houses were known to be overcrowded at the end of 1959.

Clearance Areas

No clearance areas were declared during the year.

2. Housing (Underground Rooms Act) 1959

This Act came into force in January 1959 and its purpose was
to restore to the local authorities a simple and quick means of
closing unhealthy underground rooms.

3. Rehousing on Medical Grounds

During the year 17 persons were visited who considered that
they should be given some priority in respect of Council house
allocation on account of either unfit existing accommodation or
the presence of illness or disability in the applicant's household.
In 7 cases it was considered that some priority should be given
in the allocation of a Council house and these facts were submitted
to the Council.

I have always been concerned with the following factors:-

- 1) Unfit housing which might be injurious to health
- 2) Ill health or disability which would be improved by rehousing.

Regarding the first factor, preference in respect of unfit
housing conditions should be made in such a way that healthy
families will be rehoused as a preventive measure and unhealthy
families will be rehoused in order to obtain both curative and
preventive benefits. Whenever possible, sanitary defects and
disrepair present in the unfit houses should be dealt with under
the Housing or Public Health Acts.

THE
SOCIETY OF
THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
FRIENDS
OF THE
FRIENDS

In respect of the second factor, when ill health or disability is present, the existing housing accommodation must be prejudicial to a greater extent than in the case of a healthy individual. In addition, rehousing in alternative accommodation should be of benefit to the applicant. It is necessary, therefore, to equate a person's illness or disability with his existing housing accommodation, with the possible alternative accommodation available and with the claim of other persons on the housing list.

4. Housing Improvement Grants

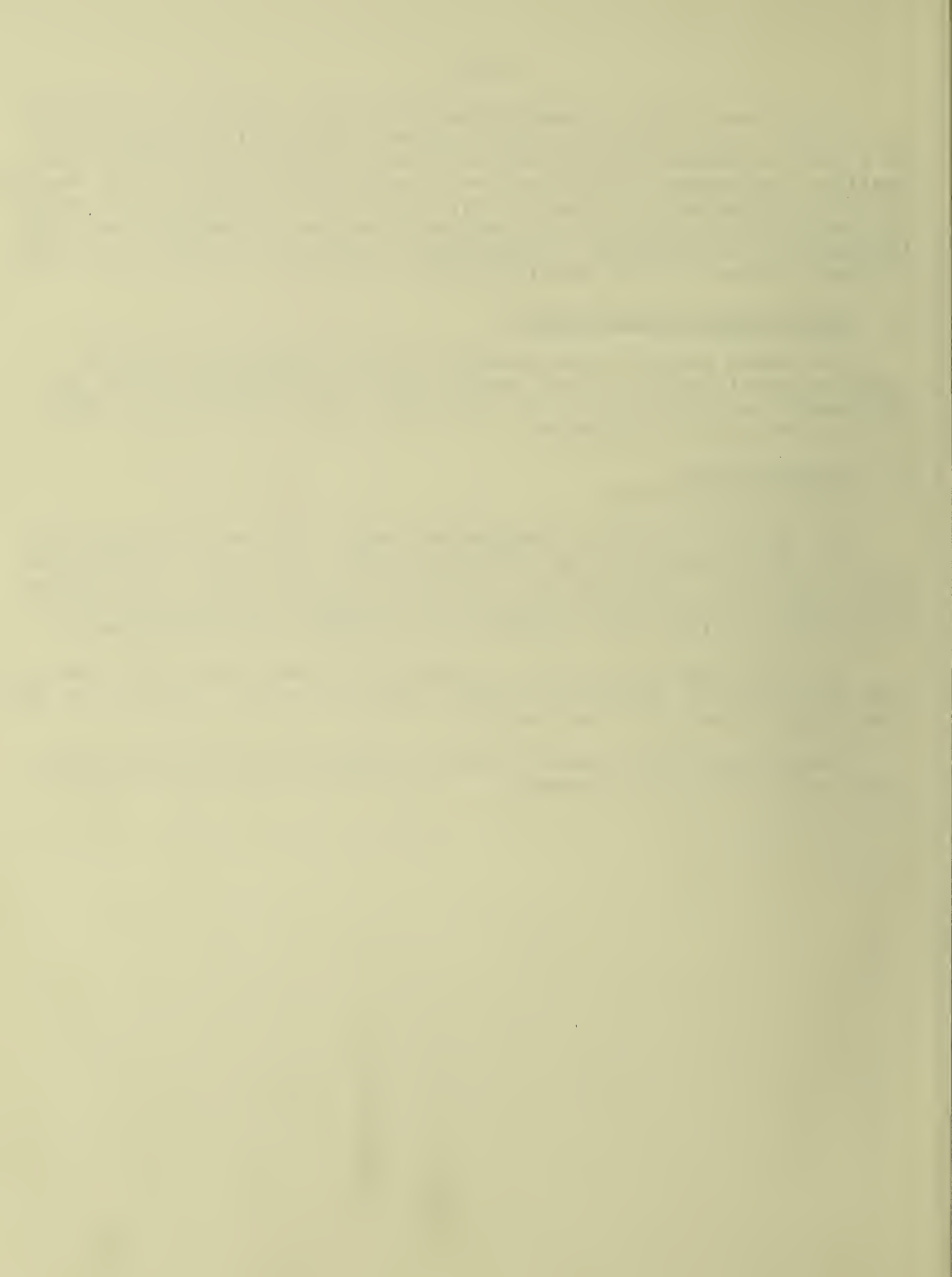
The House Purchase and Housing Act 1959 together with the 1958 Housing (Financial Provisions) Act has helped the owners of old houses to bring them up to date with modern amenities. There are now two kinds of grant:-

- a) Standard Grant.
- b) Discretionary Grant.

The Standard Grant is available towards the cost of improving a house which lacks certain amenities, such as a bath or shower, a wash hand basin, water closet, a hot water supply and a food store. This grant is a new form of improvement grant, and can be claimed as a right providing the conditions of payment are satisfied.

A Discretionary Grant is payable for a wider range and more extensive form of improvement, but payment of such a grant is at the discretion of the local authority.

Many houses in Ashburton could be improved if only the owners would make use of these grants.



APPENDIX

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
IN RESPECT OF THE YEAR 1959 FOR THE URBAN DISTRICT OF
ASHBURTON IN THE COUNTY OF DEVON

Prescribed Particulars on the Administration
of the Factories Act, 1937.

PART 1 OF THE ACT

. INSPECTIONS for purposes of provisions as to health

Premises. (1)	Number on register (2)	Number of		
		Inspections (3)	Written notices (4)	Occupiers prosecuted (5)
) Factories in which Sections 1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	6	6	-	-
) Factories not included in (1) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	5	5	-	-
) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (Excluding out- workers' premises)	-	-	-	-
Total	11	11	-	-

Cases in which DEFECTS were found

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted.
	Found	Remedied	Referred		
			By H.M. Insp.	To H.M. Insp.	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ant of cleanliness (S.1)	-	-	-	-	-
ercrowding (S.2)	-	-	-	-	-
reasonable temp. (S.3)	-	-	-	-	-
adequate ntilation(S.4)	-	-	-	-	-
effective ainage of floors (S.6)	-	-	-	-	-
nitary nveniences (S.7)	-	-	-	-	-
) Insufficient	-	-	-	-	-
) Unsuitable or defective	-	-	-	-	-
) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
her offences against the ACT not including offences relating Outwork)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-

PART 8 OF THE ACT

OUTWORK

Sections 110 and 111

There were no outworkers in the District and there is thus a "NIL" RETURN.

200